



Dangerous climate change and the importance of adaptation for the Arctic's Inuit population

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Year: 2009
Journal: Environmental Research Letters : Erl. 4 (2)

Abstract:

The Arctic's climate is changing rapidly, to the extent that 'dangerous' climate change as defined by the United Nations Framework on Climate Change might already be occurring. These changes are having implications for the Arctic's Inuit population and are being exacerbated by the dependence of Inuit on biophysical resources for livelihoods and the low socio-economic-health status of many northern communities. Given the nature of current climate change and projections of a rapidly warming Arctic, climate policy assumes a particular importance for Inuit regions. This paper argues that efforts to stabilize and reduce greenhouse gas emissions are urgent if we are to avoid runaway climate change in the Arctic, but unlikely to prevent changes which will be dangerous for Inuit. In this context, a new policy discourse on climate change is required for Arctic regions—one that focuses on adaptation. The paper demonstrates that states with Inuit populations and the international community in general has obligations to assist Inuit to adapt to climate change through international human rights and climate change treaties. However, the adaptation deficit, in terms of what we know and what we need to know to facilitate successful adaptation, is particularly large in an Arctic context and limiting the ability to develop response options. Moreover, adaptation as an option of response to climate change is still marginal in policy negotiations and Inuit political actors have been slow to argue the need for adaptation assistance. A new focus on adaptation in both policy negotiations and scientific research is needed to enhance Inuit resilience and reduce vulnerability in a rapidly changing climate.

Source: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/4/2/024006>

Resource Description

Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker

Exposure :

Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Food/Water Security, Unspecified Exposure

Food/Water Security: Fisheries

Geographic Feature: 

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Arctic

Geographic Location: 

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States, United States

Non-United States: Asia, Europe, Non-U.S. North America

Asian Region/Country: Other Asian Country

Other Asian Country: Russia

European Region/Country: European Country

Other European Country : Denmark

Health Impact: 

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

General Health Impact

Mitigation/Adaptation: 

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern: 

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status, Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Inuit

Other Vulnerable Population: Subsistence hunters and fishers

Resource Type: 

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

Resilience: 

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment: ☒

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content